

courtroom where the judge is Black, the prosecutor is Black, the court reporter is Black, and the witnesses are Black. We have a moral imperative to address this level of systemic discrimination. We should do more than simply talk about it, however. Addressing it with words is important, but we have to do more than this. We must do more than desire to manage systemic racism. We want to end it. If we don't end systemic racism, too many persons of color will continue to suffer, as is the case in this country today.

We, in this Congress, can do something about this. We have a duty to do something about it, and that something has to entail dealing with what is called a peremptory challenge, which allows a lawyer to simply draw a line through the name of a person and have that person removed from the jury, assigning some specious reason for doing so, and end up with a Black person being tried by a jury that is almost White—11 Whites and one Black.

The peremptory challenge is not something that is embedded in the Constitution. It is not something that is required. Persons can be removed from a jury for cause, but this cause, this peremptory challenge, is the cause that we should take a look at because it is absolute and it allows systemic racism to rear its ugly head in our courtrooms.

I hope to present legislation addressing systemic racism by way of the peremptory challenge.

#### BUILD BACK BETTER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BACON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BACON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong opposition to the Build Back Better Act.

President Biden, Leader SCHUMER, Speaker PELOSI, and Chairman BERNIE SANDERS have made it clear they want to transform America. In fact, those are their words. They want to transform America using reconciliation, the so-called Build Back Better Act. They are trying to do it with a 50-50 Senate, a 3-seat majority in the House out of 435 Members, and a President that won by just two States.

Last November, the country did not vote for transformation, but for middle-of-the-road centrist policies and steady leadership. That is not what they got, and voters are mad.

Just look at the polling. The President sits at a 38 percent favorable rating. The generic ballot for the House favors Republicans by 11 points—the biggest margin seen in the history of this polling.

If there is any doubt, just review the recent results of Virginia where a Republican was elected; in New Jersey where a Democrat squeaked by in his reelection. A 12-point swing in Virginia and a 14-point swing in New Jersey in just one year.

Our Nation does not desire to be a giant welfare State with cradle-to-

grave government oversight controlling their lives. Last year, the country didn't vote to give amnesty and government payouts for adults who illegally crossed our borders and jumped to the front of the line of those trying to come here through legal channels. The country did not vote to hire 87,000 more IRS agents for auditing every-day Americans to raise \$400 billion to pay for their reckless spending spree.

We need IRS agents to provide customer service to those still waiting for their tax refunds, sometimes a year late, but not for more audits. Americans didn't vote to raise taxes on a third of the middle class, which is what the left-leaning Tax Policy Center stated is the case, while it also found that two-thirds of millionaires will now get a tax break at the same time because of the changes made to the SALT deductions in this bad bill.

Americans didn't vote to remove the Hyde amendment that prevented our tax dollars from paying for abortions, and they did not vote to remove work requirements for able-bodied adults to receive welfare benefits. Americans did not vote to impede and ban domestic energy and mineral production, or to increase our reliance on China and OPEC. Our citizens did not vote to raise taxes on natural gas that Americans use to heat their homes, and we did not vote to undermine our research and discovery of new drugs that can save people's lives.

Finally, Americans did not vote to give people earning up to \$500,000 tax breaks for buying electric vehicles. The authors of this legislation have either misjudged or ignored where the country is at on these issues. This legislation is a total transformation, is what the President is saying, but it is a giant, welfare-State transformation. For these reasons, and many more, I will be voting "no" on the Build Back Better Act, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. Speaker, I pray that moderate Democrats will say no, and like many Americans, I am grateful that Senators MANCHIN and SINEMA have been voices of reason and commonsense. We need more of their voices.

#### HONORING HERB BARRET FOR A REMARKABLE LIFE OF SERVICE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. RUIZ). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. ESPAILLAT) for 5 minutes.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Speaker, last week, we celebrated Veterans Day. In that spirit, I rise today to honor a man of exemplary service, unwavering dedication to our country, and someone I am proud to call a constituent, Mr. Herb Barret.

Mr. Barret is someone who has lived a remarkable life of service. He is a veteran and a former member of the Marine Corps who risked his life for our country in the Korean war—sadly, but often known, as "the forgotten

war." Marines live by a set of values and principles, such as honor, courage, commitment. They are the bedrock of our Nation's character, and what Mr. Barret embodies every single day in our community. Throughout his esteemed career, Mr. Barret has shined bright as a beacon of perseverance and commitment, inspiring all of us with his valor along the way.

Mr. Barret is a dedicated member of our community in New York City and has laid the groundwork for the next generation of public servants to follow in his footsteps. He is a living example that anything that is possible in this country through hard work, dedication, and perseverance, through the physical, mental, and moral battles faced during combat and while serving in our communities on behalf of our great Nation. He is a man of great integrity, courage, and humility, and I am proud to call him a member of our community.

HONORING DR. JUAN TAPIA-MENDOZA

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Speaker, I also rise today to honor Dr. Juan Tapia-Mendoza, a fellow Dominican immigrant and New Yorker who has fought tirelessly to achieve the American Dream—and that he did.

Before Dr. Tapia-Mendoza opened his pediatric practice, he was a graffiti artist known only as "C.A.T. 87," whose work was found all over the subway cars and across the city of New York in empty lots, particularly in northern Manhattan and beyond.

Though he dropped out of school at a young age, his art showcased a strong motivation, and he was able to channel that motivation into his studies and return back to Santo Domingo to study medicine.

Upon his return, Dr. Tapia-Mendoza, opened Pediatrics 2000 group, which now has two locations in my district and serves over 20,000 children, supporting not only the health of our children, but their education and literacy as well, fostering the next generation of young leaders in our community.

His clinic is also an art gallery, a center that brings together young people in our neighborhood for healthy activities; uniting medicine and art to uplift our children.

Dr. Tapia-Mendoza's incredible story was the subject of a recent documentary titled, "The Graffiti Artist Who Became a Doctor," which was recently awarded an Emmy award.

Mr. Speaker, I am here not only because he won that Emmy but because he also was there for the entire community during this horrible pandemic.

He is a shining example of how tenacity, artistry, and community intersect. I commend Dr. Tapia-Mendoza for his work and for using his story to inspire a new generation of our Latino youth.

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DEFENDING RIGHTS OF  
ESSENTIAL CAREGIVERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. TENNEY) for 5 minutes.

Ms. TENNEY. Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed so many vulnerabilities in our communities, our economy, and our healthcare system. None of us were prepared for the endless virtual meetings, school closings, and weeks spent in quarantine. Nor could we have been ready for the tragic loss of our neighbors and loved ones who were living in long-term care facilities across the Nation.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today about the grave impact the negligent policies implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic had on the most vulnerable in our communities.

Over the past nearly 2 years, we watched our grandparents in nursing homes and our family and friends in group homes struggling to maintain their health, dignity, and will to go on as they were left without the care and attention they deserved over long periods of isolation.

When I was sworn in to serve in the 117th Congress, one of the first bills I introduced was the bipartisan Essential Caregivers Act. This bill is a critical step to ensure that residents of long-term care facilities are not left to suffer in isolation during this or any future public health emergency.

While shut out from their family and loved ones in isolation, many long-term care residents began suffering from depression, extreme loneliness, and a major decline in mental and physical health. It is the injustice of this century that this is going unaddressed by Congress.

Since introducing the Essential Caregivers Act, we have started a coalition of passionate and tenacious fighters across the country. It is the Essential Caregivers Movement.

With me today, I have a book authored by Karla Abraham-Conley, an amazing constituent of mine who also was prohibited from providing the needed care for her mother because of negligent policies in place by our former Governor. This is her great book. It is absolutely beautiful. "Protecting Them to Death" is the title.

Folded into each page of Karla's book are harrowing stories from individuals who either lost a loved one in a long-term care facility or witnessed from a distance as their loved ones suffered from serious declines in their mental and physical health.

These are not just the stories of New Yorkers. These are accounts from all across the Nation as you go through each part of this book. I could flip every page of this book and tell you a story from every single State. They are heartbreaking. They are cruel. Most importantly, they motivate those with the power and responsibility to make a meaningful change for our future.

When I see this book, I see the ways our laws have failed our constituents. I see the pain, but I also see the opportunity on every page, a chance for this Congress to stand up on behalf of these hurting Americans and boldly say: I will act. I will defend your rights as an essential caregiver.

Before I close, I would like to share an excerpt from Karla's personal story. "I was my mother's essential caregiver every single day prior to the lockdown. Suddenly, I wasn't there anymore, and she was incapable of understanding why."

Karla continues by saying her mother "was left to die alone in her bed, and not from COVID-19. She said to me via a virtual visit, 'Get me outta here. They're going to kill me,' which is exactly what happened."

When Karla was shut off from her mother, her mother's state of health rapidly declined. Karla's mother developed sepsis, renal failure, high sodium levels, swelling of the brain, and other symptoms that went unnoticed. After Karla fought tooth and nail to admit her mother to the emergency room, her mother passed away a week later.

Mr. Speaker, what you have heard is unacceptable by all standards, but it is just one of thousands of stories I wanted to share.

I thank Karla and so many essential caregivers, including our own VoicesForSeniors, another advocacy group in New York State, for sharing this dark chapter in their lives.

Not many people can turn grief into action and start a nationwide movement. Yet, in a time of incredible sadness and loss, so many strong men and women chose to stand up and do just that. I applaud their courage, their bravery, and their tenacity in this fight. I introduced the Essential Caregivers Act for each of them and their loved ones.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to lead this fight in Congress, but I am not leading it alone. I am joined by our colleagues from both sides of the aisle, including the bill's cosponsor and co-lead, Congressman JOHN LARSON of Connecticut. We are so grateful for his advocacy as well.

Mr. Speaker, I urge more of my colleagues to join us to pass this bill, to make it a reality and help these people who are advocating across the Nation to protect those who could be in this jeopardy in the future. I will remain committed to this fight for so many families who were forced to comply with the careless policies that prevented them from caring for their loved ones.

BENEFITS FOR BURN PIT-EXPOSED  
VETERANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ESPAILLAT). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. RUIZ) for 5 minutes.

Mr. RUIZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of my bill, the Burn Pit Registry

Enhancement Act, which passed the House unanimously yesterday, and to urge a vote in the Senate.

The Burn Pit Registry Enhancement Act would strengthen the registry by allowing a registered veteran's data to be updated by their family with his or her cause of death.

This data is crucial to identify the vast array of illnesses that are causing young burn pit-exposed veterans to die and will help doctors recognize early symptoms of life-threatening conditions and save lives.

As a Nation, we have a responsibility to provide our veterans with the benefits they have earned and deserve. We bear that responsibility even more heavily when the use of burn pits by our own military is causing veterans to develop rare pulmonary conditions and cancers.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the Senate to take up my legislation and uphold our commitment to taking care of our veterans.

## ALEJANDRO CAMACHO'S STORY

Mr. RUIZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to tell the story of my constituent, Alejandro Camacho, of Palm Desert, a veteran who has been affected by our military's use of toxic burn pits, and to call for action.

After graduating from La Quinta High School, Alejandro served our Nation in the U.S. Marine Corps. From March to September 2009, he was stationed in south Sinjar, Iraq.

At great personal sacrifice to himself, Alejandro served as a member of the 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, even missing the birth of his own son, Jacob, while he was stationed overseas.

Every single day in south Sinjar, Alejandro breathed in toxic fumes, particulate matter, and carcinogens from the batteries, medical waste, and jet fuel that was burned in large burn pits on his base.

When he returned home, the effects of breathing in those toxic fumes started taking a toll on his body. In 2019, Alejandro was diagnosed with embryonal carcinoma, an aggressive form of testicular cancer. He and his doctor believed his diagnosis to be linked to his exposures to fumes from burning jet propulsion 8 fuel, a known human carcinogen.

When Alejandro underwent the excruciating chemotherapy process, his body fell apart. He lost 50 pounds. He lost feeling in his hands and feet, and he constantly heard ringing in his ears.

Despite being deemed 40 percent disabled, despite his repeated exposure to jet fuel fumes, and despite the diagnosis, the VA denied his claim for coverage. Do you know why? Because the VA said there wasn't "enough evidence" to establish a connection between his burn pit exposure and the cancer he developed.

Mr. Speaker, I am an emergency medicine physician and a public health expert, and in public health and in medicine, it is practice that if there is